

## Wilderness Wandering (Part 3)

### The Journey Moves One

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In my first sermon in this series my focus was to establish the overall goal of a Christian's life by setting what the goal is, and who and what we are as we follow the guidance of the analogy of the Israelites in the wilderness. The goal is to allow ourselves to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ as we are seeking the Kingdom of God. It is essential that we perceive areas of pride in us, and humble ourselves before God's purpose. It is clear that God gives grace to the humble, but resists the proud. The reasons for this are straightforward and simple. The humble choose to cooperate with God; the proud resist Him.

The second sermon began by focusing more specifically on the objective God shows for the preparations for achieving that goal. These objectives—and trying to achieve them—bring the difficulties into our lives that we are experiencing as we continue our wandering. We must understand that we have never been prepared for the Kingdom of God before in our lives, so therefore what God is calling us to is new, and He has predestined us to it. His leading has brought us to repentance, and then entering into the New Covenant with Him. Fulfilling this part of the Covenant becomes our life with all of its present difficulties.

**Revelation 5:10** And have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth."

God here has provided the two major objectives in our life, and we are being fashioned by God to fulfill responsibilities in these two major areas of God's governance over His creation. One indicates civil authority, kingship; the other, educational authority. Both aspects involve service.

In that second sermon we then went to I Peter 2:1-12. In that chapter it provides a fairly complete listing of more *specific* objectives God has for us. First on the listing is that we are being fitted into an already-existing institution—a community, a family for training, using a number of metaphors as descriptive.

Turn now to Exodus 19. It is here that we can see where direction was given to what Peter wrote in I Peter 2. This is what God proposed to Israel in the Old Covenant.

**Exodus 19:5-6** Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."

This is the root and foundation of what Peter expands upon in I Peter 2. The community—Zion, the church—is first illustrated in I Peter 2 as a building, a house, a temple of which each of us is a stone fitted into it, and Christ is the Chief Cornerstone. The community revolves around Him. The community is described as "a chosen generation," "a priesthood," "a holy nation"—a special or peculiar people, the people of God who have obtained mercy and are pilgrims.

All of these descriptors have a corporate sense to them, and thus what God originally intended for Israel is being fulfilled in the church. This is important in what we are being prepared for. The church becomes "the Israel of God," as it says in Galatians 6:16. There are now two Israels. One is spiritual, the other is physical.

We are being prepared to be an active part of the *spiritual* community in which worldwide unity will become a reality. You might remember that from the second sermon. That is one of the major themes of the book of Ephesians. The first major step is the formation of the church and the training of all of those who are part of the church in order that they can be leaders under Jesus Christ to bring about the unity of the entire world that will occur after He returns.

These preparations in getting us ready for the Kingdom of God are the major operations of our lives. In that sermon I likened the priesthood as God's version of a Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. It is a major public-service organization that the Family of God—His government—will carry out.

When we left off in that second sermon we were in Romans 12:1-2. This is quite important to our preparation because, in order to be prepared, we have to cooperate. What we are going to read here, and what we have read so frequently, involves our cooperation.

**Romans 12:1-2** I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

What I am giving you in these sermons here right now is where these various pieces fit together in the purpose God is working out. We cannot be conformed to Jesus Christ unless we do what this verse says: offer ourselves as living sacrifices. Becoming a living sacrifice describes the attitude and approach to the life required for us to prepare for this responsibility that is off in the future.

Notice what Paul says in verse one there: ". . . present your bodies." In this context "body" represents our life. Everything is done through the body. The body carries all the parts that make it possible for us to present ourselves to God in this manner. Our body contains what we have to give in terms of service—everything from time to muscles, to a mind that is able to think, to a mind that is able to decide, and to character.

Everything is represented here in one thing, and that is the body, and as we learn as we go along, what we give in service is what one does every day. That is what God wants. It is not sacrificing oneself once a week, two hours once a week. He wants us to do this every day. Preparing for this major objective is virtually a full time responsibility. True worship is all that one does every day, and that is to be the offering of one's life in service to God and man.

Now, to what more specific service are we to give our body? Because Peter does not stop there, and neither does Paul. Let us connect the dots a little bit more carefully. We are going to go back over a section of the book of Numbers we went into in my last sermon I preached on this.

Turn to Numbers 8. Let us understand it a little bit more carefully.

**Numbers 8:15-19** "After that the Levites shall go in to service the tabernacle of meeting. So you shall cleanse them and offer them like a wave offering. [Symbolically, they were to be a wave offering.] For they are wholly given to Me from among the children of Israel; I have taken them [the Levites] for Myself instead of all who open the womb, the firstborn of all the children of Israel. [These Levites are going to replace what had been the responsibility of the firstborn.] For all the firstborn among the children of Israel are Mine, both man and beast; on the day that I struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them to Myself. [You can read of this in Exodus 13.] I have taken the Levites instead of all the firstborn of the children of Israel. And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the work for the children of Israel in the tabernacle of meeting, and to make atonement for the children of Israel, that there be no plague among the children of Israel when the children of Israel come near the sanctuary."

The Levites were separated out of Israel by means of being used as a living sacrifice. They were not actually sacrificed, but symbolically they were, and they were to give their lives, their body, in service to God. They were to replace the firstborn of all the tribes in a family responsibility that the firstborn formerly held. Verse 19 then becomes important. "And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron." Aaron was the high priest, and the Levites' full time job then was to assist Aaron in the operation of the Tabernacle. Now this foreshadows something far more important that occurs much later.

Let us go to the New Testament to the book of Hebrews in chapter 12. Paul here was writing to a congregation apparently largely consisting of Jewish people. This is all taking place spiritually. It does not *literally* happen, but it is spiritually occurring.

**Hebrews 12:22-23** But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn . . .

This reflects back on Numbers 8:15-19 where the Levites have taken the place of the firstborn.

**Hebrews 12:23** . . . who are registered in heaven,

Now we are talking about an entirely different group from the Levites, though. We are talking about converted people who are registered in heaven. The Levites were simply forerunners of what we are looking at here right now. It symbolizes what we are going to conclude here in just a minute.

**Hebrews 12:23-24** . . . to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

The New Testament church becomes the church of the firstborn. Now "firstborn" in this kind of context has nothing to do with the literal physical order of birth. It is though a matter of spiritual significance. For example, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Ephraim, and David were not firstborn. Not a one of them was literally a firstborn.

We are going to go back to a verse in Psalm 89, and I will show you something there about this term "firstborn." What does it say there? God is speaking. About whom is He speaking? He is speaking about David.

**Psalm 89:27** Also I will make him My firstborn.

How about those apples? David becomes God's firstborn. David was not a firstborn at all, but God conferred that honor upon David just as He did Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Ephraim, and others as well.

Let me give you a little bit more here to nail this down solidly. Let us go to Exodus 4:22. What does it say there? God is instructing Moses.

**Exodus 4:22** Then you shall say to Pharaoh, "Thus says the LORD: "Israel is My son, My firstborn.

The entire nation becomes God's firstborn. It is something that He conferred upon them—a very significant honor. To be called a firstborn is an honor that God gives to those with whom He is highly pleased. When we get to understand this, we see that the entire church becomes the firstborn, and that honor is given to them.

Let us go now to Jeremiah 31. He is talking about the second exodus, I guess you would call it, back to Israel after the Tribulation.

**Jeremiah 31:9** They shall come with weeping, and with supplications I will lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, in a straight way in which they shall not stumble; for I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My firstborn.

Here he does not mean the man Ephraim. He means the Northern Ten Tribes becomes the firstborn.

In Hebrews 12:22-24 "firstborn" is a title. It is given to those in the first resurrection because they are perceived by Him as being "in Christ," and it is given to those privileged to be set apart and prepared to assist our High Priest, Jesus Christ.

Now we will complete the symbolism of Numbers 18 in the book of Revelation.

**Revelation 14:4** These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.

What we see here is, that even as the Levites were given to assist Aaron the high priest, so is the church—those first resurrected, the firstborn—given to Christ, *our* High Priest, and these follow the Lamb wherever He goes.

Brethren, this is what we are being prepared for, and anybody who is being prepared for such a high position is going to undergo some pretty strenuous discipline. For those who are left—if I can put it that way—there is no higher calling able to be given by God than to be a direct assistant of Jesus Christ, and we are in the same group as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Joseph, and so forth—to

much lower positions of course, but nonetheless. What a calling! I will tell you, that is something to rejoice over. It is quite a distinction, and it is a heavy responsibility, and it requires not being conformed to the vain and changing fashions of the world.

With the word "conformed," we are back in thought to Romans 12:1-2. In the Greek, the word translated into the English word "conformed" implies "that which appears on the surface." In other words, it is something easily seen.

What Paul is saying by using that terminology in Romans 12 is, "Don't be a chameleon which changes color to its surroundings." That is the kind of person who has no backbone. He does not know what is going on. He allows himself to be pushed into conformity with the world, and so he just blends in rather than stand out. If we are a living sacrifice, we cannot be that way. God wants us to stand out by being different according to *His* standard of righteousness.

By way of contrast, we have "transformed." Again, this is in Romans 12:2. You have "conformed," and you have "transformed." "Conformed" has to do with what one sees on the outside. "Transformed" comes from a Greek term that indicates "something internal not seen on the outside." What Paul is inferring is that it is a matter of the heart becoming like the unchanging God in purpose and character. In other words, we are to change, be transformed from the inside out. In order to become this, we must undergo a radical change of heart in order to successfully be a living sacrifice. That is why he says a little bit further on in verse 2 that there must be a renewal of our mind. So the last part of this verse is a direct reference to a change of character. We do the sacrificing. God forms the character. It is a cooperative work, but we must be a living sacrifice.

Let us go to Hebrews 13. I am doing this because of the word "sacrifice" in Romans 12:1.

**Hebrews 13:15-16** Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

The word "sacrifice" as used here is the same Greek word that would ordinarily be used of an animal sacrifice—the reflection back again all the way to Numbers 8. So regardless of the nation, animal sacrifices were almost universal in the ancient world. They practiced it in virtually every nation, not just in Israel. Christians, though, do not do that. We do not make those kind of sacrifices, but it does not mean that a Christian has nothing to do in the way of sacrifice, because our sacrifices are now spiritual. We see a very brief naming of several of them here.

So through Christ we can offer sacrifices acceptable to God by means of praise. We can observe God's awesome intellect as shown in the creation. We can observe God's providence in our own life and in other people's lives as well, and we can give God praise for that. We can thank Him for that. Besides that, we can do good. We can share our prosperity, encouraging others, serving in providing helping hands, and thus centering one's life in the keeping of the second of the two great commandments, as well as the keeping of the first.

We are still on this subject of priests and priesthood, and we are going to turn to Hebrews 5, because there this one responsibility all by itself has a great deal of angles to it that are important to preparation. The specific subject here is the high priest. What I want you to get from that is, that

though we are not training to be high priest, we are training to *serve* the High Priest, and even as these qualities and characteristics must be in Him, we have to have a measure of these same things in ourselves.

**Hebrews 5:1-4** For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins. And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was.

We need to tear this apart a little bit so that it applies to you and me. The first and most obvious thing is, there is a high priest, so there must also be a priesthood. These same designations that apply to the high priest apply to us.

1. We are appointed on man's behalf to deal with things pertaining to God.

This is not difficult to understand. What did God do with the Levites? He appointed them to serve Aaron. He set them apart for that responsibility.

You and I have been called. That is an appointment by God. He summoned us to this responsibility, that we are to serve our High Priest. We have been called to do that. You know what Jesus said. "You have not chosen Me. I have chosen you." He said that to His disciples, and He said it to you and to me too. He may not have said it audibly, but it says it in the Book, and it is showing us here that we have been appointed to this. To make it even more mind-boggling, it is personally and individually appointed. That is awesome!

So what are we appointed to? We are appointed on man's behalf to deal with things pertaining to God. What this is, in terms of understanding, is that the priest is the link between man and God. Our High Priest of course is the most important link here, but we play a part in this link between man and God. I would say that this applies mainly to teaching and counseling responsibilities, teaching people about God.

2. A priest offers sacrifice. This sacrifice, brethren, is largely a sacrifice of prayer in regard to sins of ignorance and weakness. This is very important, because sin disrupts anyone's relationship with God, and sacrifice (if you remember the symbolism in the Old Testament) restores the relationship. We have a responsibility to our brethren to pay praise in their behalf to God, that God will forgive them and guide them, and so forth, and each other so that the relationship between them and God is in no way disturbed.

Christ paid for our sins—our sins of weakness. He did not pay for our sins of presumption. You can look in the Old Testament. There is no forgiveness for presumptuous sin. The same is true for us in our prayer. I would say the safest thing for us to do is assume that the sins of one another are not presumptuous, that they are done out of ignorance and weakness so we can pray wholeheartedly and fervently for one another with this. Sacrifice has no value regarding sins of presumption, because they are sins done with calculated intent.

3. We have to be one with man. This is covered by the statement beginning in verse 2 where it says he can have compassion. This portion of our understanding is that this has to do then with being

sympathetic. And why? Because we have experienced the same thing that others have experienced, and we can understand the weaknesses that are involved there because we have shared those things with them.

Again, our High Priest suffered with men, and He came through the experience of what happens when sin impacts on somebody even though He never sinned; but He suffered like His brethren. It specifically says that in Hebrews 2. So what is this saying to you and to me? That in our responsibility as priests-in-training, we know our own weaknesses, and because we know our own weaknesses, and we will admit them to ourselves, we can have compassion on others and not be near as critical as we otherwise would be.

Incidentally, the Greek root-word that is translated "compassion" in Hebrews 5:2 for "sympathy," in some Bibles it implies "dealing gently with," and also has a sense of patience with a brother's foolishness. "Oh, that might have been dumb." So what? It was dumb, and we are patient with it. What it is saying is that we are not to react to a brother's fault with anger, but at the same time we do not condone it either, and thus that directs the sinner in our prayers back to the right way.

I will tell you brethren, when you get studying into this stuff about priesthood, it is a big job to get prepared for.

Let us drop down to verse 8 of Hebrews 5, again picking up on Christ.

**Hebrews 5:8-9** Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,

**Hebrews 2:16-18** For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. [We are serving the seed of Abraham even as Christ did.] Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

Now being completed in preparation for doing His job is the issue here in Hebrews 5 and Hebrews 2. The teacher must have patience with perseverance, and the only kind of correction that ultimately works is those that the sinner himself makes. Get this fully, and understand it: A person cannot be brow beaten into making changes. A person may conform temporarily, but it does not change the inside. It is very likely that what occurs is that the person becomes resentful instead. This is why all those qualifications are given there.

God is showing you and me that Christ had to go through suffering so that His mind was completed in order that He would deal with you and me in the way we should be dealt with. He will understand how weak we are, and so deal with us with sympathy and kindness and compassion, and yet at the same time never condone the evil we do. But patiently, He will come back at us, and we will just keep doing the same test over and over again until we finally get it. The best thing is if we can get it as quickly as possible.

Let us not get off the subject here. Understand why we are going through such difficulty in our conversion as we are. We have been called to something that is so high, so great, so awesome, God is

going to make sure that if anybody gets into the Kingdom of God, he is prepared to do that job. It is too important. He is not going to give it to amateurs.

Later on in the series (and I probably will not get to it today) we will see how much this suffering means to our being qualified to do the job in His Kingdom, and we will just follow Jesus Christ through His sufferings so that we understand it fully. Maybe we can get to the place like Paul, who said he rejoiced in his sufferings. He rejoiced not because he was in pain, but because he knew the purpose of it. He believed in it, and he knew it was qualifying him for the Kingdom of God.

Listen to the conclusion that Paul makes in Hebrews 2.

**Hebrews 2:18** For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted. . ."

Of course He never sinned in that temptation, but He was really tempted. What did it prepare Him for?

**Hebrews 2:18** . . . He is able to aid those who are tempted."

Some Bibles will actually spread that word "aid" out a little bit further, because they feel that this translation is more understandable, because that word "succor" as appears in some translations, means "to run to the cry of." "For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to run to the cry of those who are tempted."

As humans, we may be hardened enough, cynical enough, and carnal enough from living in this world that we may hear someone's cry, and turn away from it. It is interesting that in the Parable of the Good Samaritan there was this guy lying hurt on the side of the road, and two people, both Israelites, walked by him. They saw his distress, but they turned away. Both of them did. Then Jesus said the Samaritan came along, and he ran to the cry of the person. He was a Samaritan who did it.

What this is pointing out is that this world has a powerful way of hardening us and making us cynical so that we are unwilling to help somebody, and we would say then, "Oh, let them help themselves. They can take care of it. Somebody else will come along." But it says that Christ, because of what He went through, was prepared to come to *our* aid. This is another thing that we are being trained to become.

I think that as time goes on, and times become worse, these kinds of "coming to the aid of" circumstances are going to be more and more apparent to us, and brethren, we are going to have to take care of each other before much longer. It may hurt our pride to receive that kind of aid, but in some cases it might be the difference in a life and death situation. As long as we are self-centered we will attempt to use every situation to our own advantage, and we will compete rather than cooperate. And not until we are transformed by conversion the way God is doing it are we fit to succor others God's way.

Now back to I Peter 2. There is another great pile of information here about our responsibilities.

**I Peter 2:9-12** But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. Beloved, I beg you as

sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Verse 12 is the end of that paragraph that has so much information in it about what we are being prepared for.

Verses 6 through 8, which we did not read, just mention briefly the way the world has reacted to Jesus Christ. Basically, they despise Him, and they treat Christianity with disrespect. But I want you to notice that verse 9 begins with the word "but." "But" is an adversative. It indicates that Christians must not respond in like manner, and what follows that word "but" is why.

In other words, we must not respond to the world the way the world responds to Christ. He is, in a sense, saying, "Here is what you have going for you." So Peter says, "You must focus on these things to help arm yourself so that you do not respond to them the way they are responding to Christ, and will respond to you. You must not react to them the way they act toward you." Basically, it is saying, "Pay attention to following Christ, and getting prepared for what is ahead."

Each term that follows here is significant. They are arranged in rising order of importance, from the lowest to the highest in terms of our personal and intimate relationship with God. We have not only been *personally chosen by Him*, but we have become royal, holy, and His own special people. Each one of these steps indicates a closer intimacy with God.

Let us look at the word "chosen" first. "A chosen generation" is something we have covered fairly well, but there is a bit more here. In fact, being chosen shows God's sovereignty and initiative, but for what reason? That we did not get into too much. "Generation" is sometimes translated in other Bibles as "race"—"a chosen race." Now if you get the picture there, God is creating a whole new race of different beings. That is a high calling to be chosen for.

The word "generation" especially indicates "a body of people with a common descent." So that gives us another insight into this. Its importance is going to be explained all the way back in Deuteronomy 7 as He shows us how we are coming into being. He says this in regard to Israel, and what He says to Israel applies in spades to us. They were merely physical forerunners.

**Deuteronomy 7:6-8** "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people [the new race] for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

**Deuteronomy 7:11-13** "Therefore you shall keep the commandment, the statutes, and the judgments which I command you today, to observe them. Then it shall come to pass, because you listen to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the LORD your God will keep with you the covenant and the mercy which He swore to your fathers. And He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your land, your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of

your cattle and the offspring of your flock, in the land of which He swore to your fathers to give you."

If you can just exercise your imagination and understand what is coming in the world tomorrow after Christ has resurrected all of us and we begin working within Israel, we are going to be working with God to continue to reproduce Himself in those people, and we will have a direct hand in what is going on in bringing a whole new race adding to what we are.

Now just a little review. The overriding reason for His choosing us is because He loves us. He loves us over and above what He loves others. Can you understand that? The others He has not chosen *yet* to be His children. We are forerunners of those who are coming.

The second reason is because He would keep His word to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and thus our choosing by Him must be seen as more personal than His choosing of Israel. Israel was called en masse. We, in contrast, are called personally and individually, and more importantly, in terms of value to us, is because ours is a direct spiritual connection between Abraham and us; thus our common spiritual descent.

Our descent is not necessarily physical. The direct connection between Abraham, God's friend, is limited to the physical in this context of Deuteronomy 7, and thus His love opens a very special relationship for the church with Him. This then intensifies our responsibilities to obey and serve, and be an example within our calling.

Let me repeat. What God has given us is so awesome it is beyond belief. The simple well-known verse in John 6:44 is where Jesus said, "No one—[none, zilch, nada]—can come to Me unless the Father draws him." Handpicked! That is a high calling, and yet I am afraid so many people just squander it. It is very easy for us to be absorbed into the attitudes of all those Israelites out there who just squander their time and do not give God the time of day. What a high calling we have! When God says He personally loves *you*, that is breathtaking!

Back to I Peter 2 again. He adds to that "chosen generation" by saying that we are "royal." This indicates elevation to the highest status in a community of people, and "royal" adds to the intensity of the term "priesthood." It is specifically attached to priesthood. It is not just any old priesthood, it is a *royal* priesthood, indicating a body, a group of highly-placed beings working for and with God in behalf of others.

You can attach to this again Revelation 14:4-5, because it says a great deal about why the royal position. We are not just kings. We are directly under the *King* of kings! There is no other group of people that can claim that.

Let us go to I Corinthians 1. There is always something to bring it back down to earth—the reality of our humanity, because here we see the reality as Paul gives it.

**I Corinthians 1:26-31** For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of

Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD."

So here is the emphasis on the word "holy," but this is the reality of what we are in terms of status when we are called. In becoming "royal" and "holy" by means of God's creative effort and cooperation from us, we find that there are redeemable qualities that are part of the raw material already transferred into the Kingdom of God.

We are going to read these next verses so that we understand how positive God is that He can pull off what He is about to do with us. He tells us in Colossians 1:

**Colossians 1:13** He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed [translated, or transferred] us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.

Let us carry this just a little bit further.

**Philippians 3:20** For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are not *only already transferred into the Kingdom of God, our citizenship has already been issued*. No nation gives citizenship to any except they are already born, and no citizen gives citizenship to those who are merely begotten in the womb.

Many of the weak of this world, described in I Corinthians 1:26, have run this course before us, and I know the way I look at myself, and I know the way that you look at yourself, how is this ever going to be accomplished? Well let me tell you. God is a miracle worker. He is *the* miracle worker.

Many have run this course before us, and the Bible is a witness of their wins and losses, and God never abandoned them despite their weaknesses. Instead, if by faith they persevered, He created them into what He wanted them to be. Moses is a clear example. Here we are, taking this analogy that Moses participated in as a backdrop for these sermons, and the early chapters of Exodus show that he was insecure, and gave strong evidence of a very hot temper. He struggled with feelings of inferiority and worthlessness.

Do you know what Moses' real problem was at that time? He just did not know God very well, and the more he came to know God, the stronger he got. And by the time that 40-year journey was over, he was an entirely different person from what he had been at the beginning. In God's eyes he was ready to be changed into God. He had run the course. He had overcome. He had grown, and he was going to be changed in the resurrection.

Back to I Peter 2 again. We are not only a chosen generation, we are a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and we are special people. The KJV says "peculiar" people. The term that is used in the Greek does not indicate "odd" in the sense of "strange" or "peculiar." Maybe to some people it might be both, but that is not what the word is indicating at all. The word indicates "having characteristics exclusively its own" so that it stands out. By this time you should understand what those peculiar characteristics are. We are becoming like God.

Believe me, Jesus was *peculiar* to those people that He circulated amongst. He was *strange* to those people, and eventually they got to the place where they killed Him, not because He was not a nice guy, but because He was so much like God, because He *was* God, and they could not stand it. And so the only thing they could do was get rid of Him. To them, I guess, He was odd because He was so good. He put them to shame, and they were embarrassed in His presence. That is the way we are to be peculiar, the way that we are to be special.

Here is the way we are to be peculiar.

**John 13:34** A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

This kind, this level, this degree of love is "as He has loved us." This is what will make us stand out.

**John 13:35** By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

So this is what stands out, thus making Christians peculiar, unique, and special. It is the unity produced *because* they love God and each other that really makes them stand out. This is a very disunited world. It is highly competitive. Back-biting, competing. Always there is a theme of being against.

Well, God's people are *for* one another. God's people are *for* God. God's people cooperate with Him. God's people cooperate with each other. God's people do not run one another down. God's people build one another up, and even if criticism comes once in a while, it is always given in a manner of love and not in a manner in which the person is really being cut down.

There is another way, and that is Deuteronomy 7:6. We were there before, and that is that we have a unique and private ownership. Of course that owner is God, is Jesus Christ. He bought and paid for us, for our redemption, and because of this we are a group different from others.

**Deuteronomy 7:6** "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth.

We are going to go back to Revelation 14 again. I want to read the first five verses, and we will finish on this. All of these things that are characteristics that we are prepared to be like Christ and like the Father will eventually lead to this, because this is the group that is going to work with Christ.

**Revelation 14:1** Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads.

Notice "having His Father's name written on their foreheads." This is symbolic of course, but having the name written there shows (1) ownership, and (2) it indicates the way they think. The forehead indicates the thinking portion of a human being, and when they have the Father's name, it is identifying them as thinking like the Father. Did not Jesus say, "The Father and I are one"? Was not Jesus' prayer to the disciples, and about the disciples, "that they might become one with You and one

with Me so that they are like We are"? God's miraculous creative energy is going to change this group of 144,000, and they are, symbolically anyway, going to have His name written right on their forehead: "These people belong to Me."

**Revelation 14:2-5** And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. These are the ones who were not defiled with women [a symbol of idolatry], for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit [because they do not have a deceitful heart], for they are without fault before the throne of God.

God has worked His miracle.

In the next sermon we will go into more of those miraculous things He is going to work out with you and me. I hope that when we are done with these sermons we will really appreciate our calling a great deal more.